Southern California **Bridge News**

Volume 62, #10 November 2025 Published by ALACBU

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Jordan Chodorow



As your President, I am here to serve you. If I can do anything to enhance your enjoyment of our great game, please let me know at President@D23ACBL.org.

The D23 BoD recently held a meeting. In light of FIFA's ongoing hold at the Long Beach Hilton, the Tournament Committee (Carolyn Hannas, Alan Flower, John Jones) has been authorized to select a site and dates for our Summer 2026 regional. Stay tuned for further information. Card fees will be $20 per person per session, easy, breezy, and entirely in line with comparable locations.

The D23 NAP finals were extremely well attended and turned a much-needed profit. Thank you to Jeff Grotenhuis for putting on a first-rate event! Tremendous luck to all those who will be representing us in St. Louis!

Jeanne Sinsheimer has graciously agreed to serve as our GNT coordinator. Thanks, Jeanne! John Jones has worked very hard to update our Conditions of Contest, and they have been recognized as "the most comprehensive I have ever read" by Brandon Sheumaker, who will be directing our GNT in May. Thanks, John!

An eagle-eyed reader informed me that Stan Holzberg, of whom I wrote glowingly last month, has actually served on the ACBL Goodwill Committee since 1985! That leaves me with two nominations to fill, so I'll tell you about one this month and the other next month.

Alex Kolesnik needs no introduction. He has many high finishes in national events, including a third

PRESIDENT continued on page2

Regional Director's Report

by David Lodge



And the days dwindle down a precious few, and these few precious days, I'll spend with you.

Yes, this is my swan song article. After eight years on the national board preceded by about 10 years on the D22 board, it's time for me to quietly wander off to the next phase of my volunteer life. Not that I have any idea what that next phase entails.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to be allowed to serve you.

I am very proud of a few accomplishments in which I played a part. Suggesting, much less causing, a change to an organization's very definition of itself is difficult. D22 was, when I joined the board, a member of the Western Conference, whose sole reason to exist was to publish the FORUM newsletter. It was a great paper. But I believed the cost of publishing was excessive and that an online version would serve our needs and cost a lot less. Obviously, there was pushback! But my opinion prevailed and today we find ourselves with the premier online newsletter in the entire ACBL world. And thanks to Lamya and Nick Agelidis, this remarkable publication is produced at a cost of a few pennies on the dollar compared to our previous publication.

And then I tackled an even larger problem. When I

DIRECTOR continued on page2

Inside This Issue

Rank Changes ..... page 2
Teacher's Corner ..... page 3
FYI ..... page 4
Puzzle Page ..... page 6
District 23 Presidents Listing ..... page 6
Around the Units ..... page 7
Problem Solvers' Panel ..... page 11

PRESIDENT continued from page 1

in the ultra-tough Platinum Pairs and a third in the North American Pairs. He has hundreds of regional and sectional wins and over 15,000 masterpoints. He has a runner-up finish in the USBF Mixed trials and a semifinal in the Open trials. He has run the prodigiously successful USBF junior training program for the last five years, and mentored juniors for many years before that. He serves on the USBF Credentials Committee and several ACBL committees. Alex, thank you for all you do! The ACBL Goodwill Committee will be lucky to have you!

DIRECTOR continued from page 1

joined the ACBL Board of Directors in 2017, I was overwhelmed by the inefficiencies of a 25-person board. As with any organization, there were key players, marginal people, and those who added nothing of value. But these last two groups frequently tried to justify their existence by being very repetitive and echoing what had already been offered. SOOO frustrating! It became a major focus of mine to see if I could influence a move to reduce the size of the board. A group of the BOD members were effective in convincing then ACBL BOD president, Russ Jones, to create a task force to investigate the possibility of reducing the size of the board. He asked me to lead the task force. I won't bore you with the details of what ultimately happened. Suffice it to say that as far back as I could find minutes of meetings, approximately 40 years, this item had been on the agenda six or seven times. Only once prior to our effort did the issue actually come to a vote. But we got it done. The size of the board is now 13. The BOD is substantially more efficient, and in the process we saved the ACBL tens of thousands of dollars each year.

I want to honor and thank all the great volunteers, without whom our organization could not exist. From the newbie who walks into a club, gets excited and raises their hand, to the grizzled veteran who raised their hand decades ago, you all play a vital part. Thanks for allowing me to play a part.

Hopefully, you're planning on attending the great Palm Springs Regional. It's a wonderful event with great fun at the bridge table, terrific dining experiences, normally fabulous weather and plenty for non-playing significant others to do. See you there.

District 23 Rank Changes November 2025

Junior Master
David Blumenthal
Sharon Collins
Esther Lee
Jacqueline N. O Neill
Gary Romoff
Linda Wirtzer

Club Master
Sally Baker
Sherna Foucher
David Harmon
Cary Hoffman
Denise Hoffman
Barbara Luzzatto
Serena Mougharbel
Joseph Pittman
Elaine Sarnoff

Sectional Master
Hani Abraham

Regional Master
Hsing C. Fang
John S. Meek
Amanda J. Moores

NABC Master
Jonathan Fuhrman
Susan E. Kane
Steve A. Mancini
Arthur Weinstein

Life Master
Irving Klasky
Michael Schiff
Margery Teller

Bronze Life Master
Kay A. Hyland
Irving Klasky
David N. Ochroch
Michael Schiff
Margery Teller

Silver Life Master
Dwight M. McCormick
Mike T. McKittrick

Ruby Life Master
Hanan Mogharbel
Edward Nowacki

Sapphire Life Master
Lynn Criss
Mark L. Peters
Jojo Sarkar

Emerald Life Master
Robert C. Bass

The Teacher's Corner

Case for The Defense
by Daniel F. Oakes

What do you do when rules conflict? Singletons, we're told, are good leads; so are honor sequences. That's great when you have a singleton *or* a sequence, but what do you do when you have a singleton *and* a sequence? Bridge "rules" are really guidelines. When you're a new player, they can be really helpful for getting your bearings. But to advance through the rankings, you need something a little mushier…a little scarier. I'm talking about (gasp) judgment.

I "great up" in bridge reading a lot of Mike Lawrence, and Mike was big on honor sequence leads, even when holding a singleton. In fact, on one of the hands in his excellent book *Opening Leads*, he gives an example of a hand that has an honor sequence and a singleton, and if you lead the singleton, you find partner with the ace of your suit, you get the ruff you were hoping for…and the honor sequence lead is STILL better.

OK, so sequence leads are better than singleton leads? Not so fast. Along came Swedish expert Anders Wirgren, who published a series of articles in the now-defunct (but excellent – it's worth going on Ebay to look for back issues) Bridge Today magazine, in which he argued in favor of singleton leads over sequences and forcing defenses generally. Amusingly, both Lawrence and Wirgren took a break from publishing various examples supporting their different perspectives and co-wrote a book. Even more amusingly, their book was challenging *another* bit of bridge dogma (it's a topic for another day, but their book is called *I Fought the Law of Total Tricks*.)

Well, then…who's right, Lawrence or Wirgren? Sorry, you've come to the wrong place for that; bridge judgment is about rejecting dogma in favor of particular analysis. I won't tell you whether (I think it's) better generally to lead sequences or singletons, but I *will* tell you some things to consider on any given hand where you have to choose between them.

- How good is your hand? Let's say you have both a sequence and a singleton in an unbid suit, and the opponents bid thusly (unopposed): 1NT – 2♣; 2♠ – 4♠. Responder had enough to force to game, but not enough to explore slam. A solid majority of the time, expect the opponents to have 26-28. So what? Well, if you lead a singleton, you want a ruff, right? And to give you that ruff, partner needs to get in, usually either with the ace of the suit you led, or with the ace of trump (maybe Kx if you have 3 trump) before declarer can draw trump (killing your ruff). So on this auction, if you have 4 HCP, that's a point in favor of leading your singleton – partner definitely has some stuff. If you have 11 HCP, you might want to lead that sequence; the odds on partner having that entry are going way down. Those are two near-extremes, but a good general rule is, the weaker your hand, the better the singleton lead (and conversely…)

- How long is your sequence? What if other things are equal, but on one hand, you have KQJ of an unbid suit, and on another hand, you have KQJxx? Which is better for leading your sequence, and which is better for leading the singleton? I'd be more inclined to lead the singleton with the second hand, generally (but see below). When I lead the K, I'm trying to set up tricks for the Q and hopefully the J. If I only have 3 cards in the suit, there's a good chance declarer and dummy will have at least 3 cards in the suit, too, allowing me to possibly set up 2 tricks (after I lose the ace). But if I have 5 cards in the suit, there's a good chance declarer or dummy has shortness, which means the cost-benefit analysis is swinging against me – a doubleton by either means I can only set up one tricks. A singleton in either opponent's hand means I can't set up any tricks in my sequence suit, and thus maybe I should have tried my singleton.

- How many trump do I have? If trump aren't behaving (I have 1 or 4, assuming an 8-card fit for opponents), the sequence lead (and here's where a long sequence lead (see previous bullet point) might be good) might be awkward for declarer to handle. On the other hand, if declarer is getting a 3-2 trump split, the sequence lead is less likely to be bothersome, and maybe the singleton will work better.

- What sort of trump do I have? A holding like Ax(x) is really good for a singleton lead, because declarer can't draw my trump, so I have 2 chances to get my ruff; partner might have the ace of my singleton suit, or I can get back in with the ace of trump and hopefully find a different entry to partner's hand. On the other hand, holdings like QJx in the trump suit aren't so good at all; I probably have a natural trump trick, and it's going to disappear even if I get my ruff.

(Picture it: I lead a singleton, catch partner with the ace, get a ruff with my small trump…now my QJ of trump fall under declarer's A and K. I ruffed with a trump I was going to score anyway! Maybe I should have tried my sequence.)

- Who bid what? A singleton in declarer's (or worse yet, dummy's) side suit? No thanks! A sequence lead might have set up two tricks; instead, I set up dummy's suit for discards. I get one extra trump trick, and it costs me two tricks in my sequence suit. I'd have been much better off leading my sequence and setting up tricks while partner has control of dummy's suit. What's that? Partner might not have control of dummy's suit? Well, that's even more of a reason not to lead it, isn't it?

The bottom line is, neither a sequence nor a singleton is *always* better than the other; on one hand, the singleton will be the winner, and on another, the sequence will be. Keeping some of these factors in mind may help you correctly ascertain which is which the next time you're lucky enough to have *two* good leads.

FYI Addendum
Speculation on the Colorization of Masterpoints
by Bob Gruber



In response to the recent FYI Series, one reader wrote: "I have always wondered how the different colors (ACBL likes to call colored points "pigmented points") of Masterpoints were created. Any insight?"

Well, insight/speculation is all I have because it seems that no one has recorded this bit of bridge history. The short answer to the question is masterpoints were colorized for two (2) reasons:

1) To restore achieving the rank of Life Master to a significant accomplishment, and
2) To increase attendance and profits at tournaments.

The long answer, is obviously a little more involved. In the beginning of the ACBL (chartered in Dec 1937 by merger of the American Bridge League and the United States Bridge Association) there were only black points. In those early days, black points were nearly as scarce as hen's teeth. In a club game, you might finish 3rd and receive a Masterpoint Award slip for 0.04 masterpoints, or maybe less. And yes, 0.01 was not unheard of. (By the way, until maybe the 1990's, you had to save those slips and mail them to the ACBL yourself.)

John Moran, an early expert player, who lived his later years in Camarillo and once represented the US in international competition, said in those very early years you could win an event at a tournament, and be awarded one (1) masterpoint. These two bits of information on club and tournament awards should give you some appreciation of what it took to win 300 masterpoints and become a Life Master.

I don't know the timeline, but sometime along the line, the ACBL started inflating masterpoint awards. (That's why some players say the ACBL is in the business of selling masterpoints.) No doubt, achieving Life Master was a daunting goal initially. I'm guessing the point awards were too low for many players to maintain interest in the game, so ACBL did what it could to counter that out-of-reach feeling. That meant inflating the masterpoint awards, adding to the number of identified ranks, and increasing the awards/certificates to club players.

Tournaments were always intended to be money-makers for the sponsors. (ACBL receives the membership dues and shares some of it with Districts and Units, but these entities are expected to bring in additional revenue via tournaments.) I believe the first colored points were red points, which were awarded at regionals (sponsored by a district). To put some teeth into red points, ACBL ruled the 300 MPs to become a Life Master include 25 red points.

I don't know, but I think gold points came next. In any case, both red points and especially gold points were created to ensure Life Masters had achieved some success against good players. The 300 point requirement now included 50 red points and 25 gold points, which could only be earned at the National Tournaments (NABCs; I believe at some point there were

4 "Nationals"—Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall). You couldn't just play frequently at weak club games for 30 years and become a Life Master. (An interesting viewpoint here is that the ACBL was catering to two seemingly opposite goals—one to boost attendance by inflating the point awards, the other to preserve the genuine achievement of earning Life Master rank.)

Next came silver points, created when attendance at sectionals started to lag. Achieving Life Master then required 50 silver points in addition to the red and gold and 300 total points requirements. Unlike red and gold points, which could be won at regionals and nationals, silver points were only awarded at sectionals. If you could get them at regionals or nationals, there would have been scant boost in sectional attendance.

In a similar vein, ranks above life master were created as were platinum points. Just a reminder in case you missed all the weasel words, much of the prior writing includes a healthy measure of conjecture.

Today's requirements for achieving Life Master if you joined ACBL after Jan 1, 2010 are:

Life Master 500 points
At least 75 are black
At least 75 are silver
At least 100 are red/gold/platinum, of which 50 or more are gold/platinum

To see the full ranking schedule go to Masterpoints • American Contract Bridge League (acbl.org).

(*Editor's note: with Bob's concurrence, we add the following information, gleaned from past issues of the ACBL Bulletin:)*

- The April, 1969 issue had the first reference to "gold points" that we could find.
- Red points predated gold points; this is known, because when gold points were introduced, anyone possessing *any* number of red points had the gold point requirement waived. They were *that* hard to get!
- The May, 1983 issue noted that a proposal for sectional points to be ½ red, ½ black was rejected by the ACBL Board. So silver points had not yet been invented, and Sectionals paid out merely black points.
- The creation of silver points was announced in the January, 1987 issue.
- Our copy of "The Official Encyclopedia of Bridge," published 2001, lists platinum points, but does not indicate when they were introduced. Sorry!

Southern California Bridge News
Published monthly by ALACBU, Inc.
1800 Avenue of the Stars, 12th Floor,
Los Angeles, CA 90067
Phone: 310-440-4100
email newsletter@acblunit551.org
Editor/Designer. . . . . Tom Lill
Managing Editor. . . . . Jordon Chodorow
Contributing Editor. . . . . .John Jones

Copy deadlines: the 10th of the month. Opinions expressed in the Southern California Bridge News are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of ALACBU, Inc., The Bridge News or the Editor. The Bridge News reserves the right to reject material it considers to be in poor taste or deems otherwise unsuitable for publication.

The Puzzle Page

Bridge Jeopardy
by John Jones

Category: Non-Bridge Card Games, with Musical Clues

And the answer is …

$100 – This two-handed game compares a card from each player, with the higher card winning both cards. Edwin Starr might ask "What is it good for?"

$200 – A two-handed game in which the objective is to form melds (sets of three or four of the same rank), or runs of three or more consecutive cards of the same suit. In the Beatles song "Rocky Racoon" the doctor came in stinking of this.

$300 – This is any solo card game with several variations. In 1966, the Statler Brothers sang of playing this game "until dawn with a deck of 51."

$400 – A popular poker variation in which each player gets two cards and awaits the flop, turn and river to complete their hand. It includes a state name. Kenny Rodgers would sing that you have know when do this.

$500 – Generally, a four-handed game requiring each player to bid for exactly the number of tricks he/she will take on each hand. In a 1979 song, AC/DC sang about a "Highway to" here.

District 23 Unit Presidents

The Presidents of our nine Units in District 23 do a lot to make *your* bridge experience better. They seldom get any thanks or even recognition. To help redress that imbalance, here is a list of the current incumbent Unit Presidents:

Unit	President
551 – Pomona – Covina	Eileen Finlay
553 – Glendale-Verdugo	Adam Barron
556 – Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley	Paula Olivares
557 – Long Beach	Leo Dittemore
559 – Pasadena – San Gabriel	Lisa Walker
561 – San Fernando	Joan Rubin
562 – West Los Angeles	Jordan Chodorow
564 – Downey-Whittier	Kent Burrell
568 – Torrance-South Bay	Carol Decordova

* Kent has resigned, but the election to replace him has not yet been held

(Solutions to Bridge Jeopardy are on page 10. No peeking!)

☺☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺☺ ☺ ☺



Submitted by Tom Lill

☺ ☺ ☺☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺☺ ☺ ☺

Around the Units in District 23



Pomona – Covina by Tom Lill

www.acblunit551.org

La Fetra Games: Tuesdays and Fridays, 8:45
Individual: December 6, 10:00 a.m., Ontario
Club Championships: December 2, 5, La Fetra
Unit Pairs Game: November 22, 11:00 a.m., Ontario:
HOLIDAY PARTY POT-LUCK
Unit Pairs Game: December 20, 11:00 a.m., Ontario
Unit Board Meeting: 10:15 a.m. before the game

In the October Unit Game, Gary Atwell – Lulu Minter took first with a 70.31% game. Not too shabby. Yours Truly – Patrick Finley were next, followed by Ramona Hernandez – Nona Stokes and Tim and Eileen Finlay in a tie for third.

We also held a team game last month. In a hard-fought affair, everyone won at least two matches. The winners were Fredy and Lulu Minter teaming with Steve Andersen – Gary Atwell, with 73 VPs. Right behind with 71 VPs were Clint Lew – Linda Tessier – Tim and Eileen Finlay, with 71 VPs.

In the November Individual, Dan Robinson took first place with 62.5%. Tom Cusack was second, and Linda Tessier – Ramona Hernandez tied for third.

Thanks again to Patrick Finley, for collating the masterpoint statistics for October. At La Fetra:

1	17.29	Lulu Minter
2	16.20	Patrick Finley
3	14.00	Fredy Minter
4	9.36	Caryn Mason
5	9.90	Ramona Hernandez
6	9.01	Nona Stokes
7	8.48	Gary Atwell
8	8.16	Clint Lew
9	7.55	Steve Mancini
10	7.29	Tom Lill

And at the Claremont Bridge Club:

1	2.36	Patrick Finley
1	2.36	Patrick Rogers
3	1.45	David Ochroch
4	1.24	Steve Andersen
5	1.08	Kitty Moon

At La Fetra, there were six games over the 65% benchmark. Five of these were turned in by the Minters: 70.83%, 69.63%, 67.46%, 66.66%, and 66.02%. The other big game – good only for second place – was turned in by Steve Mancini – Patrick Finley, 65.93%. Other winners not topping that magic 65%: Caryn Mason, Vic Sartor, Mary Ann Wotring, and Clint Lew.

Over in Claremont, all but one game's winner topped 65%. The best effort was a 75.0% whopper by Carl Silsbee – Dan Robinson. Next was another monster, 72.92% by Patrick Rogers – Patrick Finley. Then we find a 69.79% game by Ramona Hernandez – Rose Roberts (good for second place!), 67.5% by Steve Andersen – Art Weinstein (also finishing second!), and finally 66.67% by Dave Ochroch – Kitty Moon.

In tournament action, a few of our members attended the Ventura Regional. Top scorers were the partnership of Judy Mogharbel and Yours Truly, bringing home 17.70 points, all but 0.48 gold. We had a couple of heartbreakers: one board of the Saturday bracketed teams dropped us from 1st to 3rd, and again one board of the Sunday bracketed teams dropped us from 1st to 2nd. Next in line we find Amr Elghamry, with 12.57; Richard Parker and Peter Kavounas, who took first overall in the Tuesday Gold Rush and gathered 5.28; and Cici Mougharbel, who placed first in B in an open pairs game, gathering a total of 3.60. The total comes to a nice 62.13, almost all of it gold.

We had quite a few promotions last month. Cici Mougharbel has advanced to Club Master. Steve Mancini and Art Weinstein are NABC Masters. David Ochroch has advanced to Bronze Life Master. Judy Mogharbel has reached Ruby Life Master. Congratulations, All.

For our hand-of-the-month, I have a couple of oddities. First, in a BBO game, I did something that I don't think I've ever done before, in some 55 years of playing this silly game. (Well, there were some serious gaps in that span.) No, it was NOT finishing first, thank

you very much. After the dealer (RHO) passed, I PASSED in 2nd seat holding Axx – Axxx – Axx – xxx. Sure, 13 total points and 3 quick tricks, but NINE losers (count them!). How did it turn out? Partner opened in 4th seat holding 18 HCP, and we reached the predestined contract of 3NT. The nice thing is, my pass allowed the contract to be right-sided, since partner had all the secondary honors and tenaces. (Better lucky than good, it seems.)

For our *real* hand, try this on for size. LHO, the dealer, opens 2♦, preemptive. Partner doubles, RHO raises the ante to 3♦, and you find yourself having to find a call with

♠ K Q 8 7 3 ♥ 9 8 6 5 4 3 ♦ 5 ♣ Q

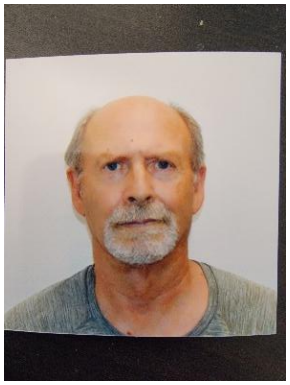
Only our side is vulnerable. So, whaddaya gonna do, Buckwheat?

Knowing that the opponents were not timid bidders, I placed partner with a reasonably good hand, and stretched a bit (!!!) and went 4♦ (please pick the major suit you like best, partner), LHO bid 5♦(!), partner called 5♠, and after a bit of thought RHO doubled. Pass, pass, pass. It turned out well for us because the full deal was:

	North ♠ 6 5 ♥ K J 10 7 ♦ J 8 2 ♣ A K 8 3	
West ♠ A J 4 2 ♥ A 2 ♦ A K 4 ♣ J 7 6 4		East ♠ K Q 8 7 3 ♥ 9 8 6 5 4 3 ♦ 5 ♣ Q
	South ♠ 10 9 ♥ Q ♦ Q 10 9 7 6 3 ♣ 10 9 5 2	

+850 was of course a cold top. Again, better lucky than good!

Quote for the month: "If you're going through hell, keep going." (Winston Churchill)



Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley

by Don Dachner

The Santa Clarita Bridge Club has weekly games at the Newhall Community Center in Newhall every Friday at 10:00. It's a 24 board open game, and it's free.

We also have a 12 board game every Wednesday at the same location and time which is for the beginner crowd. You can take back your bid, for example, or ask any question about what's happening. There are mentors at all the tables to help out. We usually have 4 or 5 tables, and it's free.

Also, on Wednesdays at 9:30, there is a half hour lesson covering various introductory topics usually attended by 10 people or so.

November Friday game results.

10/3		
NS	John Langer – David Khalieque	62%
EW	Gary Trenta – Carol Trenda	60%
10/10		
NS	Hani Abraham – May Abagi	66%
EW	Sara Seely – Jacky Moor	62%
10/17		
NS	John Langer – Margie Pinkers	62%
EW	Bernard Seal – Rand Pinsky	62%
10/24	No bridge	
10/31		
NS	Alan Nueman – David Khalieque	63%
EW	Gary Trenda – Carol Trenda	63%

This contribution was from Bernard Seal

ACOL vs Standard American

Over the summer and in the early fall, I have been playing bridge in the U.K. I joined a local bridge club and have been playing a couple of times a week. As you may or may not know, 90 percent of bridge players in England play a system called ACOL. No, it's not an acronym. Apparently, it is named after the Acol

Bridge Club located in Acol Road in London in the 1930s, where and when it was devised.

The most differentiating feature of it from Standard American is that you can open one of a four-card major. Additionally, most people play a weak no trump of 12-14 points. To show a strong balanced hand, you open at the one level and bid no trump after partner responds.

One would assume that regardless of whether you play ACOL or Standard American, one should, if bidding either system correctly, arrive at the same contract. But strange things can happen.

In one hand, playing with a partner who normally plays ACOL but who also knows Standard American to some extent, I had a balanced 17-point hand with five nice diamonds and the rest of the suits 3-3-2. I opened one no trump. At all the other tables, declarer opened one diamond, planning to show their strength by bidding no trump with their rebid. However, partner had a three-point hand and my partner passed as did all the other responders in the room.

I went down one and got a bottom. At the other tables, everyone made either two- or three-diamonds. What happened? Can Standard American come to the rescue? Yes, it can. It turns out that partner had a 4-4-4-1 hand with a singleton club. In other words, he had a perfect hand for bidding Garbage Stayman. He should bid two clubs and can pass anything I bid, which in this case would be two diamonds. Then everyone in the room would have been in a diamond contract whether playing ACOL or Standard American.

See y'all in December.

Next Month we will hear about May Abagi playing with Omar Sharif



Long Beach
by Leo Dittemore

www.acblunit557.org
www.LongBeachBridge.com

Our annual Halloween Party was a festive success! Players arrived in costume, tables were decked out in spooky flair, and the bridge was as lively as the décor. Special thanks to our volunteers who made the event seamless and spirited. The costume contest winners and themed snacks added extra joy to the day.

We're thrilled to spotlight some standout performances:

- Fern Dunbar & John Gallagher delivered back to back 70% games this month, showcasing sharp bidding and resilient defense.

- Ed & Michael Piken achieved a remarkable 78% game, one of the highest scores recorded this year. Their synergy and precision were a masterclass in partnership play.

Excitement is building for our upcoming Sectional November 15&16 with:

- 30+ tables of pairs expected across multiple sections Saturday.

- 15+ teams registered for the Swiss Team event Sunday.

Volunteers are coordinating boards, hospitality, our director finalizing schedules, and our tech team is ensuring smooth scoring. This promises to be one of our most robust Sectionals yet.

Save the Date!

Mark your calendars for Sunday, December 14! Our Holiday Party will feature:

- A festive lunch

- Bridge games with extra masterpoints

Preparations are underway, and we welcome contributions—whether it's food, décor, or helping hands.

Downey-Whittier
by Daniel F. Oakes

Bob and Linda Krause kicked off a five-Wednesday month on October 1 by taking *all* the marbles – 1st overall with a 61.10% game. Mike Ventri and Steve Hough were 2nd N/S, and John Jones and Nancy Stebbins were 3rd. On the E/W side of the field, John Petrie and Sankar Reddy also broke 60%, and the field was so flat that they won by a mile – the other E/W pairs were all under 50%! Avice Osmundson and Terry Binns were 2nd E/W, and Jim Gorin and Anita Frost were 1st B.

The Krauses were at it again a week later, this time with a 62.50% game, but it was only good for 2nd pace, as Kiran Kumar and Avice Osmundson slightly outpaced them with 63.54%, beating them by half a matchpoint! Jack Rainsberry and Bill Skupen were 3rd (and 2nd B), and John Dobson and Raj Ramchandani were 4th (and 3rd B).

Osmundson and Kumar repeated as 1st overall on the 15th, this time about a full board over Rainsberry & Skupen (2nd E/W and 2nd overall, as well as 1st B overall). Jon Yinger and Alan Flower took the N/W honors ahead of Ventri and Hough. The Krauses (good month!) were 1st B N/S and 2nd B overall.

Ventri and Dan Oakes were 1st overall on the 22nd, ahead of Osmundson & Kumar on the E/W side, with Ivan Claman and Terry Binns taking 3rd E/W (and 1st B E/W). Skupen and Rainsberry were 1st N/S and 2nd overall, with Jones & Stebbins finishing 2nd N/S. N/S B prizes went to the Krauses (1st) and Toni Hoffman and Anita Frost (2nd).

Rainsberry & Skupen led the way on the 29th, ahead of Yinger & Flower and Ventri & Hough. 1st B was Dobson and Ramchandani, and 2nd B was Hoffman & Frost again.

Apologies for dropping the ball and not getting articles in the last two SCBN's, but to make up for lost opportunities, here are a few nice scores that slipped under the radar:

Jon Yinger & John Jones had a 68.50% game on September 24.

Jones & Stebbins hit 67.50% two weeks earlier, on September 10.

Ventri & Oakes scored 66.45% on September 3, and needed almost all of it, as Petrie & Reddy were at 64.08%.

Yinger & Osmundson scored 63.02% on August 20. (If you're keeping track, that makes wins with three different partners for Avice. She can win with anyone! Uhhh…I didn't mean that the way it sounded, Jon.)

Finally, there was a nailbiter on August 13, with Yinger and Flower turning in a 63.75% game to beat out the 62.58% scored by Kumar & Osmundson.

San Fernando Valley

by Alan Curtis

The Ventura Regional is behind us but we had several players who had success in the tournament headed by Bob Bass, Gil Stinebaugh, Gerri Knilans, John Clark, Joan Rubin and Jeff Goldberg.

Also during the Regional, we had two players earn Life Master status - Irv Klasky and Mike Schiff.....Congratulations gentlemen! Also advancing in rank this month was Alan Curtis who became a Diamond Life Master.

The December Unit/Holiday Game will be held on Sunday, December 21st at the 750 Bridge Club. Please be on the lookout for details - seating will be limited to 13 tables!

Finally, don't forget to spread the word about the Easybridge classes starting on Saturday, January 17th at 9:30 am at the 750 club. One hour of lecture followed by play.....first 4 weeks are FREE! The program is being taught and coordinated by Jay and Toni Hansen. To register, please call Jay at 805 501-9048!

Have a very Happy and Blessed Thanksgiving!

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

$100 – What is War?

$200 – What is Gin?

$300 – What is Solitare?

$400 – What is Texas Hold-em?

$500 – What is Oh Hell?

Problem Solvers' Panel

John Jones is moderator. Mark Bartusek, Sid Brownstein, David Chechelashvili, David Grainger, Daniel Korbel, Mister Mealymouth, Jill Meyers, Rick Roeder, Mike Shuster, and Jon Wittes are panelists.

As always, panelists are playing 5-card majors, 15 - 17 NT, and 2/1 GF. Beyond that, except where indicated, panelists may use any reasonable methods.

This is my Thanksgiving edition. Thank you to my many readers. Thank you to all my panelists! I will also take this opportunity to thank my proofreaders: Patrick Finley, Gabe Foster, Chris Hitchcock, Jo Melis, and Bob McDonell. And the biggest thank you of all to Tom Lill, my wonderful editor!

1

IMPs
None Vul

North	East	South	West
1♣	3♦	???	

You, South, hold: ♠ AQ8 ♥ J108642 ♦ 5 ♣ J103

What call do you make?

This problem comes from the Ventura Regional, where Charlie Finch faced this problem. The 8 HCP hand is a little too good to do nothing. Double is possible but isn't perfect with three spades and six hearts, while an immediate 3♥ call is game-forcing.

Bartusek: Pass. I might be wrong, but I don't think I have the values to compete at the 3-level. I won't like partner bidding 3♠ or 3NT. Sure, bidding might work on occasion, but in my humble opinion it more likely will cause a disaster.

Mealymouth: Pass. A (misnamed) "Negative" Double is likely to get us *two* tricks higher than the (admittedly flawed) Guideline of Total Trumps suggests. My second choice, 3♥, might strike gold, but if it doesn't it will leave us like the late lamented boll weevil: "just lookin' for a home." Perhaps a poster child for Transfer Doubles and Responses to replace "Negative" Doubles. Susan, do you still think "transfers are for streetcars"?

Grainger: Pass. If I act and partner has no heart fit, I am courting disaster, while partner will reopen with a lot of hands.

Brownstein: Double. But my experience says pass is probably right.

Korbel: Double. Gross!

Meyers: Double. My second choice is pass. I would pass if my JTx were not in partner's suit. I think I have too much to pass.

Shuster: 3♥. It's now or never. Six-card suits are the key to the city. The alternative is FOUR hearts, so I'm not setting up a force, but this route leaves 5♣ open as a contract as well.

Wittes: 3♥. This is a bit of an overbid, but with good texture in my heart suit and side support for partner's opening bid suit, I feel my hand is worth a 3♥ bid.

Chechelashvili: 3♥. I will stretch a little, all other options look worse.

And last, let's hear from the panelist who submitted the problem. He was Charlie's partner.

Roeder: 3♥. Then duck!

Charlie tried 3♥, which didn't work well this time.

2

IMPs
None Vul

North	East	South	West
1♠	pass	2♠	pass
3♦*	pass	???	

* Help suit game try

You, South, hold: ♠ 1083 ♥ Q6 ♦ 765 ♣ AK652

What call do you make?

Problems 2 through 5 were all given to me by my Canadian friend Bill Treble. Bill sends out problems to several panelists and reports the results to many bridge players, including me. Some of the hands are from a home game that is played at IMP scoring. I will report on Bill's panel at the conclusion of each hand.

This hand has the possibility of bidding 4♠, signing off in 3♠, and maybe a few other possibilities. Some of the panelists note the problems with the methods of a help suit game try. There are superior methods available to expert players, including using the next step after a raise to ask partner where his/her values are, and using higher bids as short suit game tries. This two-way game try method was promoted by Eric Kokish. However, I was given the hand with the help suit game try, and help suit game tries are fairly standard methods. The 2♠ raise was absolutely maximum, but the distribution and location of the high cards, with three small cards in both diamonds and spades - is troublesome. Let's hear from the panel.

Bartusek: 4♠. Sure, the AK of clubs might be fairly worthless opposite shortness (5=3=4=1), but how can I not bid game with my super maximum. My close second choice is an eccentric bid of 3NT which might be the winner?!?!

Korbel: 4♠. I'm not staying out when I'm this maximum.

Is 3♥ a Last Train return game try, or is it a semi-natural game try? Let's listen to the next two panelists.

Grainger: 3♥. I have a maximum, but the worst holding in both of partner's suits, so I will try a counter game try and see what happens. I'm willing to pass 3♠.

Chechelashvili: 3♠. I don't have help in diamonds; if I had more in hearts instead of clubs I would bid 3♥.

Wittes: 3♠. Although I have maximum values for my 2♠ bid, I have the worst spade and diamond holdings I could have on this auction, so will be conservative at this vulnerability.

Brownstein: 3♠. The three small diamonds say get out of Dodge.

The next two panelists note the problem with the methods.

Mealymouth: 3♠. "Help, I need somebody! Help, not just anybody! Help, you know I need someone ..." to explain what help means as an adjective. I know what a weak suit is, I know what a strong suit is, I know what a short suit is, I know what a long suit is---but a help suit? "When I was younger, so much younger than today ..." I bid this way with ♦KJ83, so that my partner would know that a possibly worthless ♦Q92 was worth its weight in diamonds. "But now those days are gone" and the typical holding for opener's so-called 3♦ "help suit" is ♦J83. Regardless, what I have is cheese, so I retreat to 3♠ before the Limburger begins to smell. But if 3♦ were a short-suit game try, or if opener had rebid 3♥ as a real suit, I would jump to 4♠ for joy.

Meyers: 3♠. I would ask my partner to change to a different system than help suit game tries. Three little is not help, plus I have "bad" spades.

Is 3NT worth considering?

Shuster: 3♠. xxx, xxx in partner's suits is terrible for any game. 3NT is moderately tempting, but partner won't pass it with a stiff club, and that is the case in which it is probably right.

Roeder: 3NT. Declaring from the exalted Qx side. Who is to say that Partner cannot have Jxx, Kxx or Axx of hearts? If he is 5-5, he can always correct, but there are lots of hands where 4♠ has four losers (i.e., two hearts, one spade, and one diamond).

Bill reported to his readers that: "I have taught my mentees to accept all game tries with a maximum and refuse all with a minimum. Thus, they would bid 4♠ here. I would also. I use the help suit to guide me when I have a medium raise." Bill was given this hand by his friend Paul. Paul reported that: "at the table 3♠ is as high as you want to be, since partner also has xxx in

diamonds." Bill's panel reported three votes for 3♠, five votes for 3♥, and one vote for 4♣ (showing the location of values for a possible slam on the way to 4♠).

3

IMPs
None Vul

North	East	South	West
1♠	pass	???	

You, South, hold: ♠ 873 ♥ 2 ♦ KQJ754 ♣ K64

What call do you make?

Go low or go high? I'll start with the go low crowd.

Shuster: 2♠. A maximum, but not quite up to my standards for a 3-card limit raise.

Brownstein: 2♠. Perhaps partner may make a game try.

Roeder: 2♠. No ace and bad trumps indicate not upgrading.

And for the limit raise group.

Bartusek: 1NT/2♦. This strongly depends upon whether you play 1NT as forcing or not. *It's forcing in this column because 2/1 GF is a system constraint.* If forcing, then it seems to me bidding a forcing 1NT and usually bidding 3♠ on the next round is best. When playing a non-forcing 1NT it seems better to overbid slightly and respond 2♦ (fearing that partner might pass a 1NT call). Players are opening worse and worse hands holding a 5-card major and one must adapt to it in various ways like this hand.

Chechelashvili: 1NT, if we play it as forcing. If 1NT is semi-forcing, then I'll make whatever bid is available to show invite with three spades. If no 3-card limit raise bid is available then I bid 2♠.

Grainger: 1NT. This looks like a 3-card limit raise, so I show that, probably starting with 1NT.

Korbel: 1NT. This is worth a limit raise. If partner passes, I'll live with it.

Meyers: 1NT. Then 3♠ if that is a limit raise.

Wittes: 1NT. I will bid 3♠ over minimum bids from partner. I'll bid 4♠ over 2NT to show a limit raise.

Mealymouth: 1NT. Oh to be back in Kansas, where I could bid a Culbertson Neanderthal 2♦ and follow with a 2♠ preference over 2♥. Don't tell me partner is about to rebid something other than hearts. If playing Strong Two-Over-Ones, I'm tempted to bid the necessary concomitant invitational single-jump 3♦, but I dare not with three spades, albeit weak ones. So, I'll mark time with a forcing 1NT response and pull in my horns with a mere 2♠ preference over partner's likely 2♥ rebid. Opposite the "wrong" hand for partner, I might have little better than a yarborough. In the perhaps-soon-to-be late-lamented Bridge World's "Master Solvers' Club," I would expect a lone-wolf 2♠ raise from retiring editor Jeff Rubens, the last bastion of sound bidding in bridge. *Mealy's reference to the late-lamented Master Solvers' Club is because the Bridge World magazine is sadly coming to a close. December will be the last issue. A sad ending for a great magazine.* A 2♠ raise might just be right, but I don't want it, you can have it, it's too fat for me.

Bill's panel had one vote for starting with a game-forcing 2♦ response. His other panelists all showed a 3-card limit raise, with whatever their methods were. The table result was going to be 4♠ making no matter what the responder's bid was.

4

IMPs
None Vul

North	East	South	West
3♣	3♥	???	

You, South, hold: ♠ KJ742 ♥ 52 ♦ void ♣ AQJ1096

What call do you make?

I told my panel when I sent them this problem that the 3♣ call was not a misprint or one of my screwups. Who knows what the opponents might make, or what we make?

Some bid game in clubs, maybe hoping it sounds like a possible make.

Shuster: 5♣. Take away the RKC for now and see what happens next.

Brownstein: 5♣. Let them work it out.

Chechelashvili: 5♣. Most likely I am preempting them and not partner, so will bid as high as I am willing to go.

Roeder: 5♣. I may not be done bidding. Bidding 6♣ right away is waving a red flag in front of El Toro. *It's been my experience that when the opponents make jump bids which are advance sacrifices that it is generally right to bid on.* I admire the 3♠ bid – certainly the right call if you judge that slowing down the auction is best. The correct bid is unknowable, but partly a function of your perception of your opponents.

Mealymouth: 5♣. Probably down one for -50, but perhaps a make, if they let partner play it. Let me stop for a moment to polish my crystal ball. Will they? Ah, I see it now: I'll let them play in 5♥ and accept my -480. I don't want to push them into a slam I can't beat.

The big jumpers!

Grainger: 6♣. Then I'll await developments. I'm likely to have to bid 7.

Meyers: 6♣.

The 3♠ bidder that Roeder referred to:

Wittes: 3♠. Wildest hand of this set. I will compete to the 6-level in clubs if necessary. *This can win in a couple of ways. If the 3♠ bid gets partner to bid again, either raising spades or rebidding clubs implying a spade fit, then you will know to not let the opponents play anything short of the 7-level. But if partner is quiet, this may slow the opponents down.*

And now, "bring on the clowns" – I love their efforts!

Korbel: 4♥. Lol. Let's try 4♥!

Bartusek: 4♦. First time I've ever psyched in this column, but it seems mandatory to confuse the opponents. If partner raises me then I can safely retreat NV to 6♣. My bid might even steal the opponents' trump suit when 5♦ or 6♦ makes.

Bill held the 3♣ hand while playing with David Eddy. He reported that his panel had: four votes for 7♣, two votes for 3♠, one vote for 4♦, and one vote for 5♣.

At the table David Eddy chose 5♣. The opponents' hands were: ♠AQxxx ♥KQJxxx ♦xx ♣void facing ♠xx ♥ATxxx ♦AKQJTx ♣void. Their table auction was: 3♣ (3♥) 5♣ (6♦) Pass (Pass) 7♣ (P) P (7♦) Pass Pass Pass making 7.

5

IMPs
E-W Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♥	pass	2♥	pass
pass	X	pass	???

You, South, hold: ♠ AJ75 ♥ A10 ♦ Q10653 ♣ 54

What call do you make?

Partner didn't act immediately over 1♥, so there must be a flaw with an immediate double. What is the flaw and how much does that leave us making?

Some go low. My partners balance so aggressively that I am with the 2♠ bidders.

Grainger: 2♠. Seems so obvious it must have failed in practice.

Korbel: 2♠. Partner didn't act the first time and may not even have four spades.

Bartusek: 2♠. Partner can be light NV. Why would I hang partner? After all, partner passed over 1♥. I expect partner to have about 8 HCP.

Chechelashvili: 2♠. 2♠ if my partner is a type who would overcall on a 4-card spade suit with a hand not appropriate for a double holding 11+ points. Otherwise 3♠S.

Mealymouth: 2♠. Countless years ago, when I first heard about "balancing", I was thrilled - what a brilliant concept! Decades of experience convinced me otherwise. Get in and get out, before the opponents can get together. I could almost adopt "Do it now, or not at all!" as my motto, to be carved on my gravestone when I die. But now I must wonder: why didn't partner double 1♥? For which unbid suit did he lack support? I'll guess that he didn't lack four spades, else he could have balanced with 2NT to offer a choice of minors. So I'll bid 2♠. If I'm wrong, partner can bid 2NT to tell me "Guess again!"

Some panelists think we have competitive or invitational values and bring diamonds into the picture.

Roeder: 3♦. Revealing auction. The bad guys likely have nine hearts. Perhaps the reason that partner did not double immediately is due to mediocre spades. If the opponents compete to 3♥, I have enough to follow up with 3♠.

Wittes: 3♦. Partner did not double over the initial 1♥ bid, and might very well have only three spades for the delayed double. However, I will bid 3♠ over a 3♥ bid by the opponents, which should describe my hand perfectly.

Brownstein: 3♦. I would have made a takeout double after 2♥. But if forced to pass, then I would bid 3♦ competing with perhaps 9-card fit. I would follow up with 3♠ over 3♥ by an opponent.

Shuster: 2NT. I'll take a slow route to 3♠, to both suggest extra values and another strain.

Meyers: 3♥. If partner bids 4♣; I'll bid 4♦, if partner bids 3♠, not sure what I will do.

Bill recommended a 2NT bid to his readers. "2NT is an unusual NT - planning to convert 3♣ to 3♦ to show diamonds and spades". The other nine panelists bid a quiet 2♠, on the theory that partner is bidding for us both when she balances. Yes, partner had about 8 points and 2♠ was a good response here. Several panelists would have doubled 2♥, planning to convert 3♣ to 3♦ to show 2 suits.

Thank you, Bill, for all the good hands and reports!